UNITED NATIONS **A**

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/50/724
7 November 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Fiftieth session
Agenda item 29

COMMEMORATION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Letter dated 26 October 1995 from the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

During the debate held on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, a number of delegations referred to the final series of tests to complete the French nuclear test programme in terms which have led the French delegation to make the following clarifications:

1. The final series of tests currently under way is the conclusion of a programme designed to guarantee the security and reliability of French weaponry and to acquire independent mastery of simulation techniques.

2. The completion of this programme will enable France to support the conclusion in 1996 of a comprehensive test-ban treaty which would be truly significant, in that it would ban all testing of nuclear weapons or any other nuclear explosion. It is the choice of the zero option, made first by France, which gives the signing of such a treaty its full meaning. Had it not been for this final series of tests, France would have been unable to take such an initiative, which has given new impetus to the test-ban treaty negotiations.

3. This final series of tests conforms to the law and to French undertakings, particularly at the Review and Extension Conference of States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1995. France has exercised the greatest restraint in carrying out the minimum number of tests for its security objectives. It has always made it clear that it reserves the right to complete its programme.

4. Finally, the French nuclear tests have no harmful effect on the environment.

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Every precaution has been taken in that respect; the French test sites are those which have been subject to the greatest number of independent scientific investigations. Studies carried out by such undisputed authorities as Mr. Tazieff, Mr. Atkinson and Mr. Cousteau have reached the conclusion that our experiments have no effect on any aspect of the environment, i.e., on the atmosphere, fauna or aquatic flora or indeed on geological stability.

The same is true of comparative radioactivity, as proved by the measurements taken from 1991 to 1994 by foreign laboratories of international repute.

This fact was confirmed by the report presented at the meeting of ministers of environment of the South Pacific Forum in Brisbane on 10 August 1995 by a group of Australian scientists.

Furthermore, the European Commission stated on 24 October that the French tests posed no danger to the health of populations or the environment, and that all security measures had been taken by the French authorities.

In conclusion, on 8 August, France requested the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to organize an independent scientific evaluation mission, to be carried out at the end of this final series of tests.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 29, and included in the report of the special session to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary.

(Signed) Alain DEJAMMET